# San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area

# Resource Management Plan Development

**Alternatives Development Meeting #1**

**February 22, 2014**

**Hereford, AZ**

# Agenda for Today's Meeting

- Project Summary/Update
- SPRNCA Planning Area Boundary
- BLM Planning Process/Alternatives Development
- Opportunities for Public Involvement
- Practical Exercise - Work Through One Resource Area
- Small Group Work
- Conclusion/Field Trip/Wrap Up/Next Steps

# Purpose and Need

For the Proposed Action

- The planning effort is needed to design provisions that assure protection of the SPRNCA's resources as stated in Public Law 100-696.
- The purpose of the RMP is to identify the current management situation, desired future conditions to be maintained or achieved, and management actions necessary to achieve those objectives.

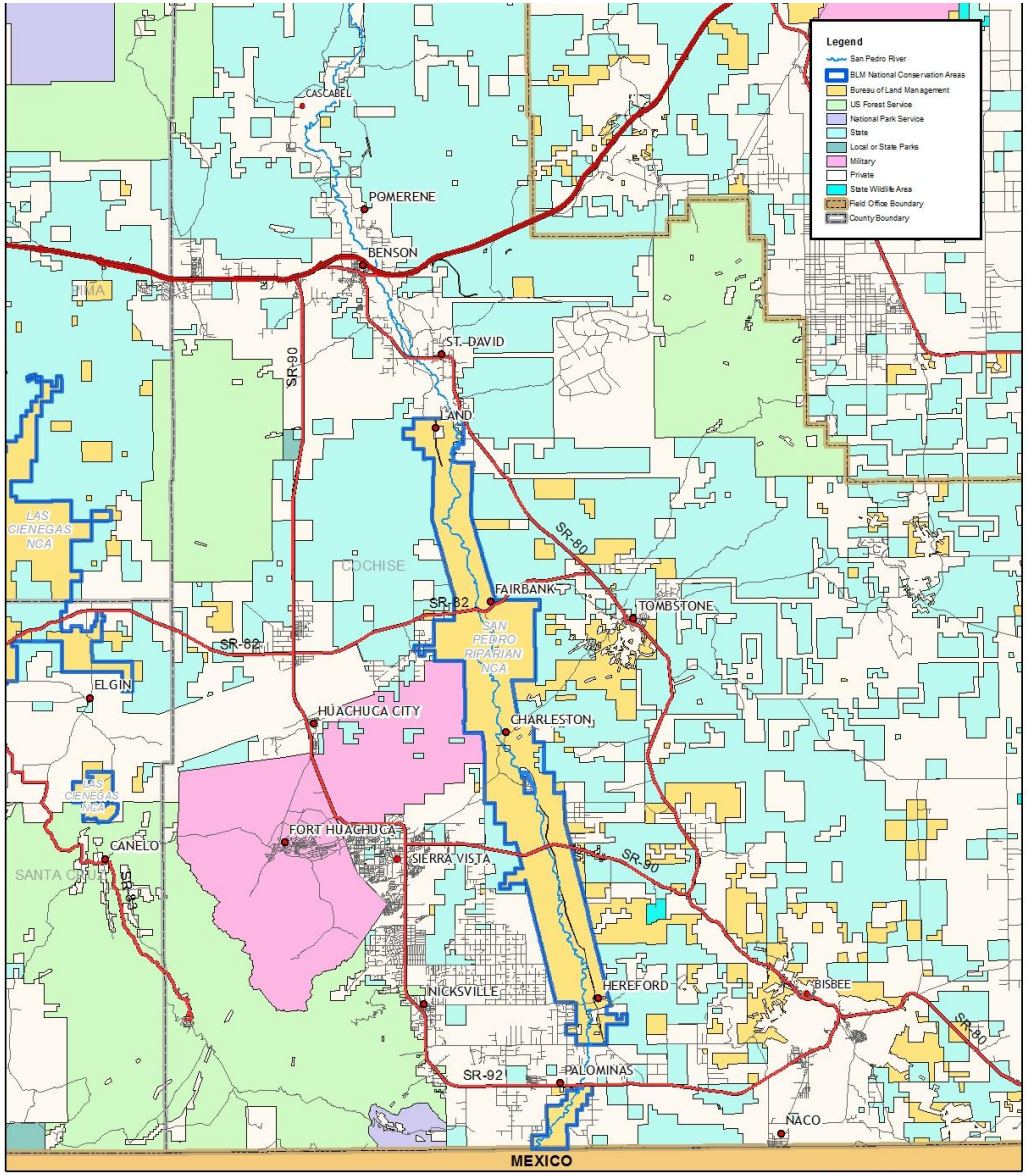
# Public Scoping

San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area
Resource Management Plan

# Synopsis of Scoping Effort

- Three public engagement strategy meetings in Sierra Vista, Benson, and Tucson (May and June 2013).
- Five resource focused education and scoping forums in Sierra Vista (July and August 2013).
- Four formal scoping meetings in Sierra Vista, Benson, Tucson, and Bisbee (August and September 2013).
- Final scoping report published January 22 2014.

| Comment Category | Number of Comments |
|---|---|
| Recreation, travel management, public health and safety, and firearms | 129 |
| Land health (uplands and watershed function), soil resources, vegetation, fire management, adaptive management/climate change, and riparian areas | 93 |
| Lands and realty, livestock grazing, and energy and mineral resources | 86 |
| Water resources | 52 |
| Cultural resources, paleontological resources, and Native American concerns | 38 |
| Fish and wildlife habitat and special status species | 38 |
| Planning area boundary | 19 |
| Special designations (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers), visual resources, and wilderness characteristics | 18 |
| International border | 11 |
| Socioeconomics | 6 |
| Total | 490 |

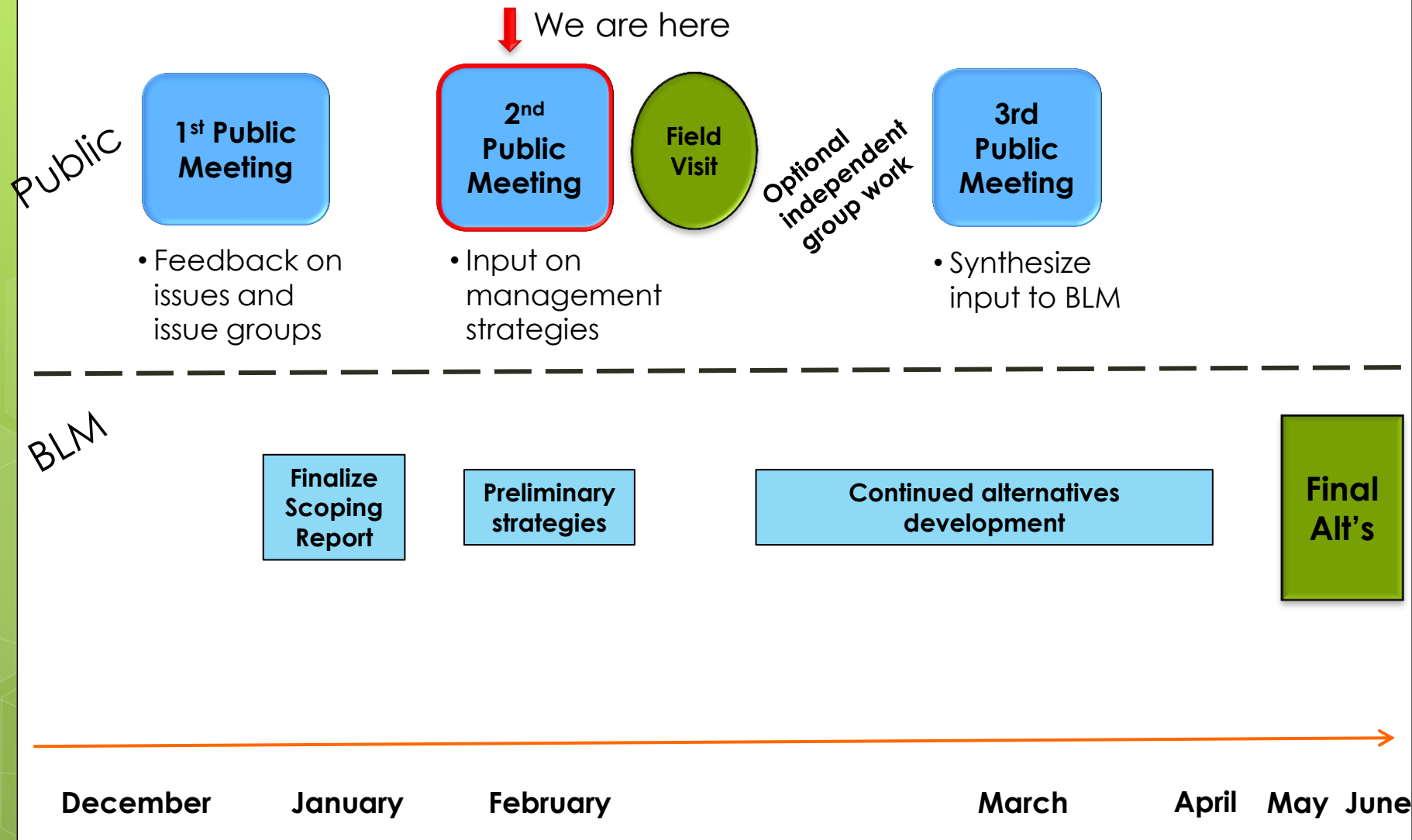



# SPRNCA Planning Boundary

# BLM Planning Process

Alternatives Development

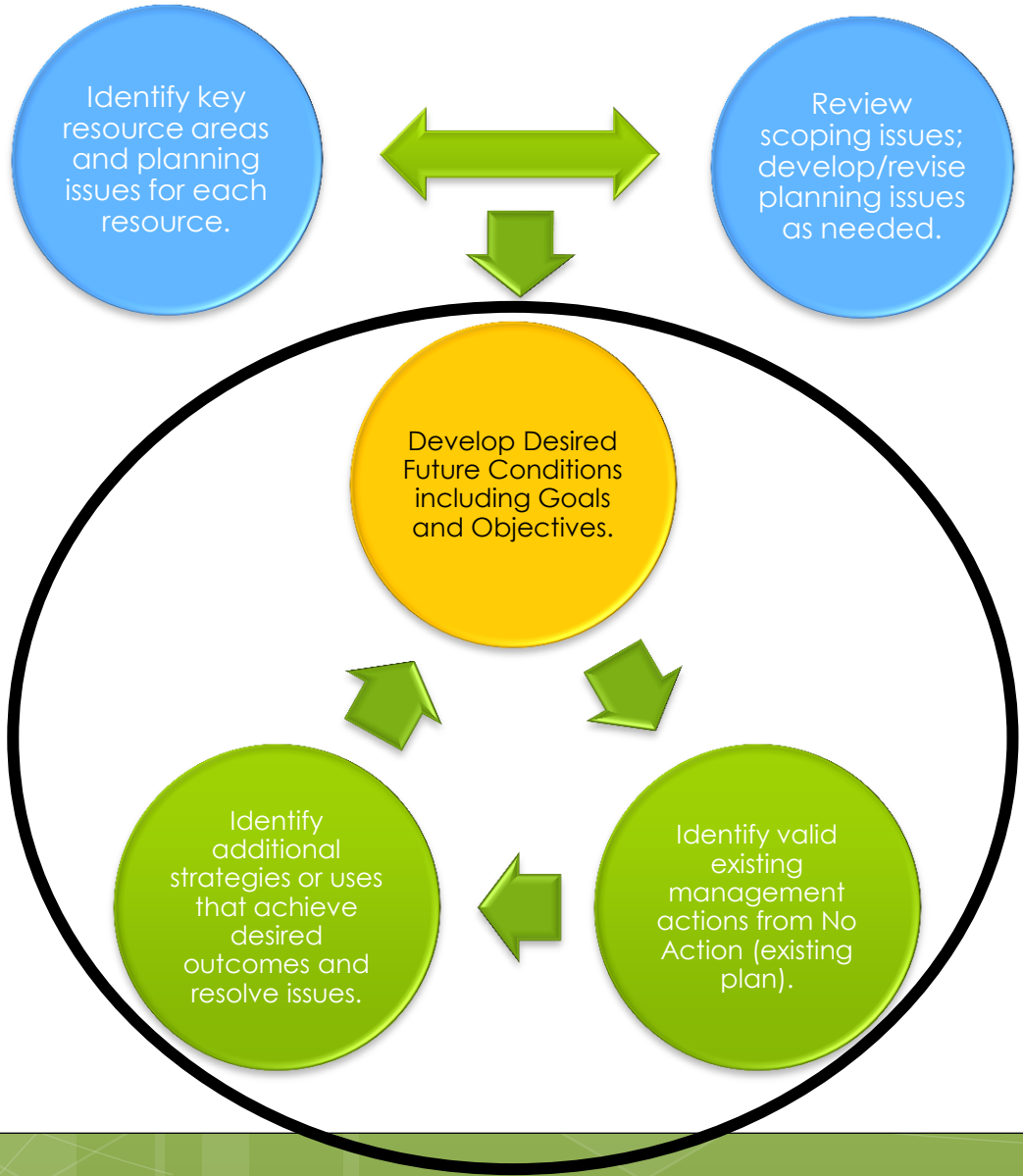
# Alternatives Development: Timeline



# What are alternatives?

- **Alternatives are** sets of planning decisions that address or resolve the planning issues/potential impacts identified in the scoping phase
- Alternatives establish **goals, measurable objectives** (desired conditions), and **management actions** including:
  - Protective measures and management criteria
- **Multiple** alternatives will be developed

# Steps of Alternatives Development



- Designated by Congress in 1988:

  "*To conserve, protect and enhance the* ***riparian area*** *and the* ***aquatic, wildlife, archeological, paleontological, scientific, cultural, educational, and recreational*** *resources of the conservation area.*"

Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-696)

# Rangeland Health Standards

- Standard 1 – Upland Sites

*Upland soils exhibit infiltration, permeability, and erosion rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, and landform (ecological site) as indicated by such factors as:*

  - *Ground cover: litter, live vegetation (amount and type), rock*
  - *Signs of erosion: flow pattern, gullies, rills, plant pedestaling*

# Rangeland Health Standards

- Standard 2 – Riparian- Wetland sites

*Riparian- wetland areas are in properly functioning condition as indicated by such factors as:*

- *Gradient*
- *Width/depth ratio*
- *Channel roughness and sinuosity of stream channel*
- *Bank stabilization*
- *Reduced erosion*
- *Captured sediment*
- *Ground water recharge*
- *Dissipation of energy by vegetation*

# Rangeland Health Standards

- Standard 3 – Desired Resource Conditions

*Productive and diverse upland and riparian-wetland plant communities of native species exist and are maintained as indicated by such factors as:*

  - *Composition*
  - *Structure*
  - *Distribution*

# Wildlife

- Maintain/restore diverse native habitats
  - Maintain/restore native wildlife/fishery populations
  - Maintain or enhance nesting/migration habitat for neo-tropical birds
  - Maintain/enhance open wetland habitat for native fish, amphibians, reptiles
  - Maintain existing wildlife corridors
  - Reintroduce or augment native extirpated species
  - Remove non-native/invasive wildlife species

# Objectives

- Upland Habitat Objective Example

*On loamy bottom ecological sites, provide habitat for grassland sparrows by maintaining the following:*

- *An average of 6-8" grass height*
- *Ground cover of live grasses and litter > 75%*
- *Less than 10% shrub canopy on two-thirds of the loamy bottom range sites*

# Riparian Area

- Soils
  - Decrease erosion/sedimentation
  - Increase aggradation to restore/rebuild soil profile
- Water
  - Raise the water table to maintain base perennial flow (resource values)
  - Improve water quality to prevent impairment
- Channel Maintenance
  - Maintain flushing flows
  - Maintain riparian vegetation
  - Increase recharge

# Aquatic

Maintain/restore diverse native vegetation communities

- Riparian (cottonwood willow)/xeroriparian (mesquite bosques, sacaton bottomlands, washes)
- Aquatic (rushes, sedges, submergents, and emergent)
- Desert scrub (small amount of mesquite, mariola, tar bush, hibiscus, ocotillo)
- Desert grassland (grama, tobosas—native perennial grass)
- Remove non-native/invasive plant species

# Objectives

- Wetland Objective Example

*In the historic floodplain, achieve and maintain a vegetation community in wetlands with the following conditions:*

- *Ground cover > 90% on banks*
- *Emergent vegetation covering 75% or more of the perimeter of the aquatic habitat*
- *Vegetation community on banks dominated by rushes, sedges, deer grass, and willows*

# Other Resource Desired Conditions

**Archaeological /Cultural**
- Protect, conserve, and enhance cultural resources

**Paleontological**
- Protect, conserve, and enhance paleontological resources

**Scientific**
- Provide continued scientific research when compatible with the conservation values.
  - Not a stand alone resource area but captured under cultural, paleontological, fish and wildlife, etc..

**Educational**
- Provide for continued educational opportunities when compatible with the conservation values
  - Primarily captured under recreation.

**Recreational**
- Provide for recreational opportunity compatible with the conservation values

**Lands and Realty**
- Consolidate BLM ownership of entire SPRNCA
- Maintain, restore, and enhance existing natural character of the SPRNCA

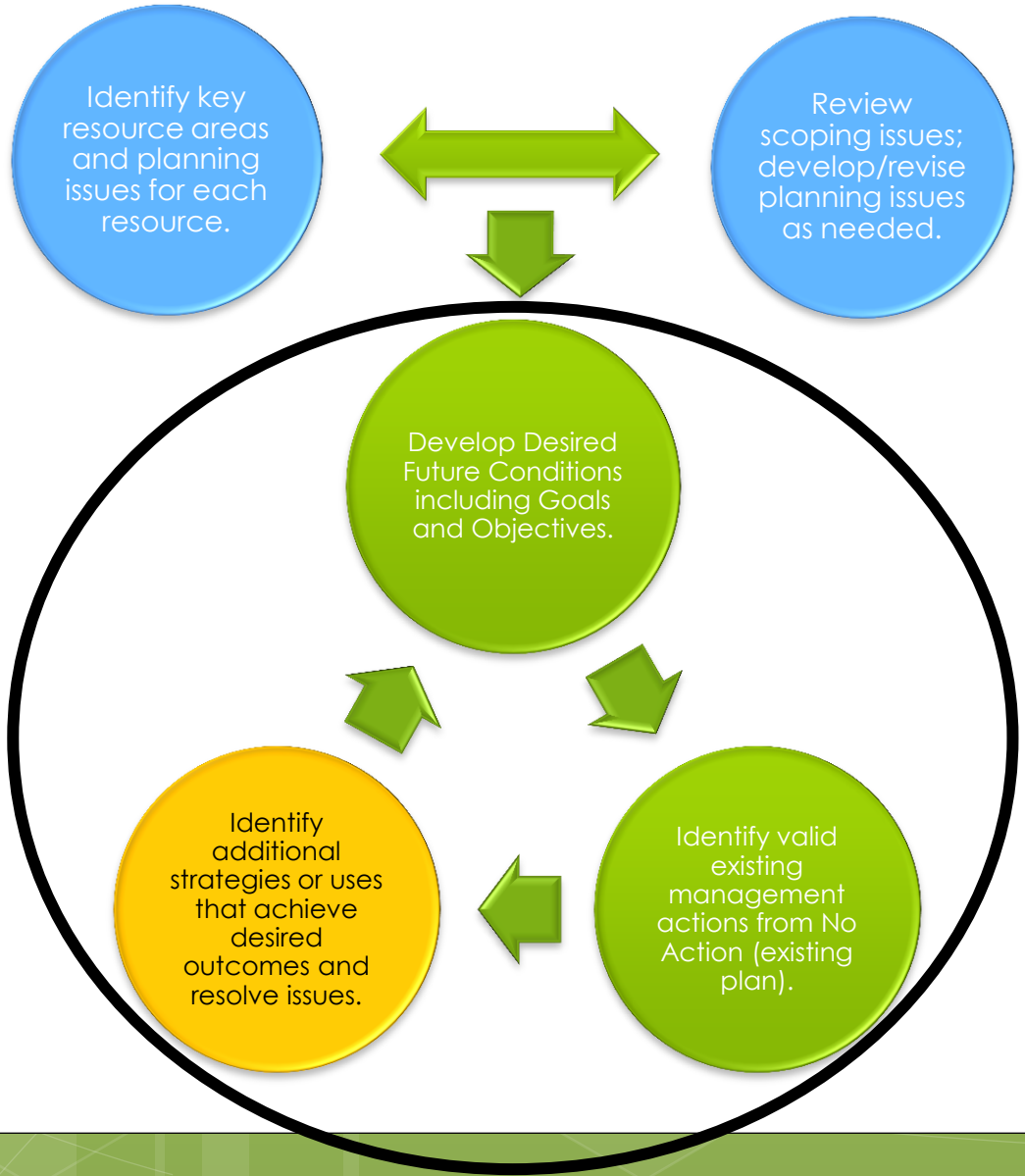
# Questions?

# Break (15 Minutes)

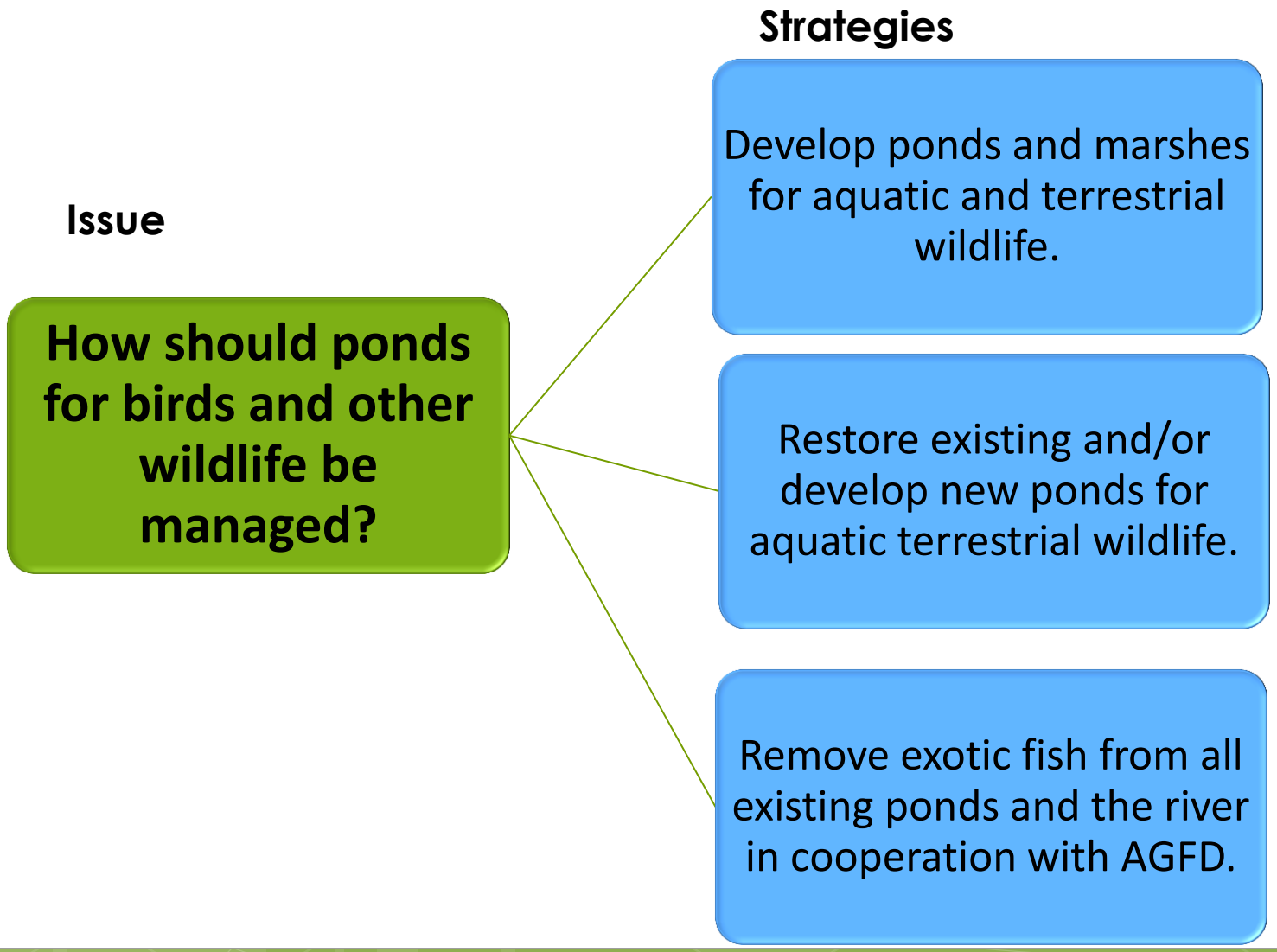
# Ways to Participate in Alternatives Development

- Practical Exercise (Today).
- Small group discussion on issues (Today)
- Self Directed Issue Group Discussions (After Today)
- Site Visit (Saturday, March 1)
  - Specific things you would like to see.
  - Local folks you would like to have come along.
- Next Alternatives Development Meeting March 22

# Steps of Alternatives Development



# Example of an Issue/Strategy



# Group Example: Lands and Realty

- Desired Future Conditions
  - Consolidate BLM ownership of entire SPRNCA
  - Maintain, restore, and enhance existing natural character of the SPRNCA
- For each issue question:
  - Consider the range of strategies.
  - Is anything missing?
  - Is anything unclear?

# Lands and Realty

**Issue**

**Strategies**

**Are existing designated utility corridors adequate on the SPRNCA? Are new corridors needed?**

No designated corridors except for the existing Charleston Corridor.

# Lands and Realty

**Issue**

**Are there lands in the SPRNCA that should be identified as exclusion areas for future utility corridors?**

**Strategies**

All new utility ROW confined to the Charleston Corridor.

# Lands and Realty

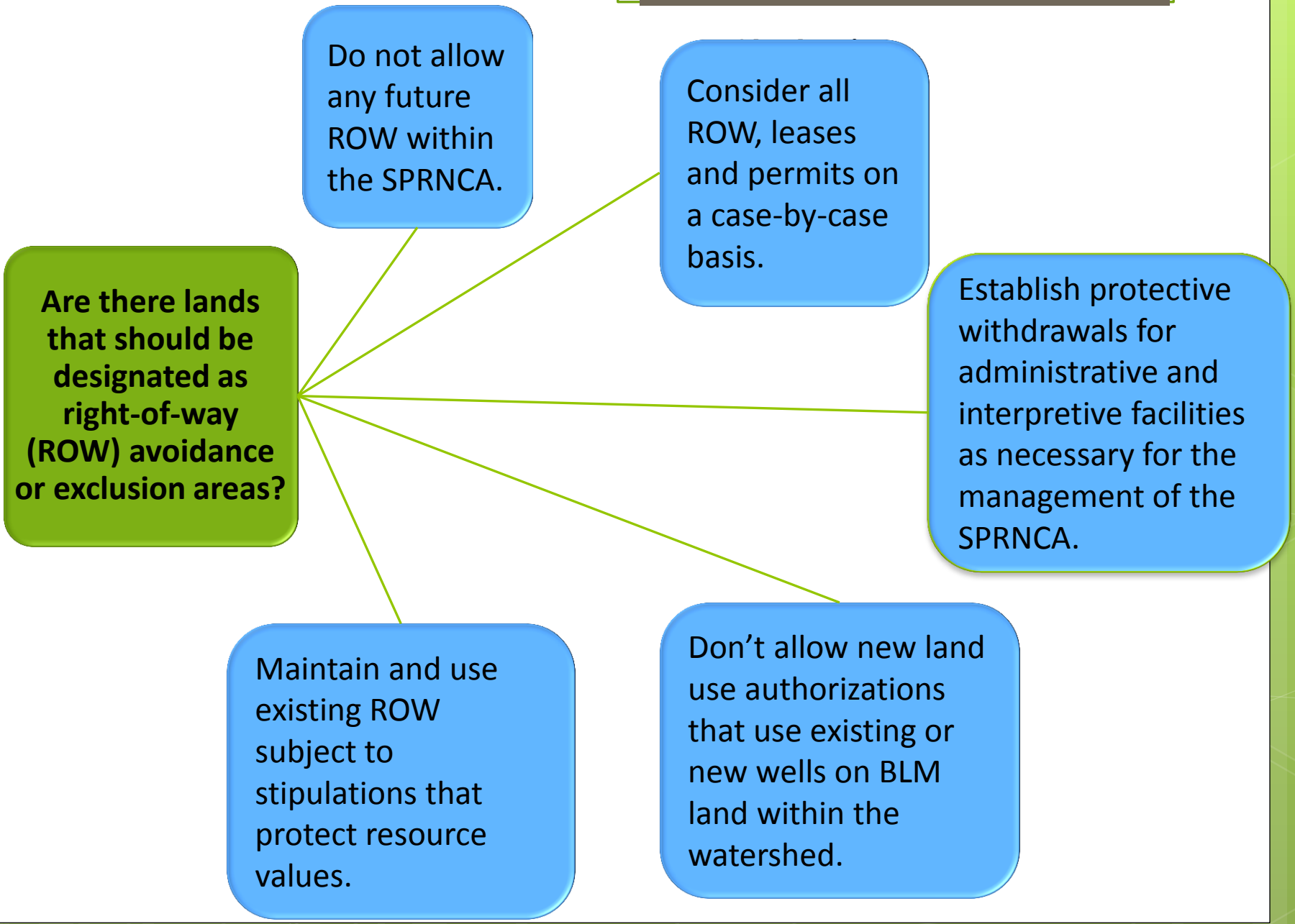
**Issue**

**Should energy development be allowed in the SPRNCA?**

**Strategies**

- Close the SPRNCA to all energy development.
- Close the watershed to permitted energy development that requires extraction of groundwater from the watershed.
- Close the watershed to any new permitted wells on BLM land with the exception of wells required for livestock and wildlife waters.

# Lands and Realty



# Lands and Realty

**Issue**

**What changes, if any, are needed to the current acquisition criteria for the SPRNCA?**

**Strategies**

Acquire lands within the boundaries of the SPRNCA through exchange, purchase, donation, condemnation, or easement.

# Lands and Realty

**Issue**

**Strategies**

**Can land tenure adjustments be made to improve wildlife corridors and connections between key habitat areas on the SPRNCA?**

Acquire lands outside the SPRNCA boundary within the watershed for the protection and enhancement of resource values.

**Are there land tenure adjustments that can be made to maintain or improve riparian areas, fish and wildlife habitat, watershed function and condition, visual resources, or other resources and uses?**

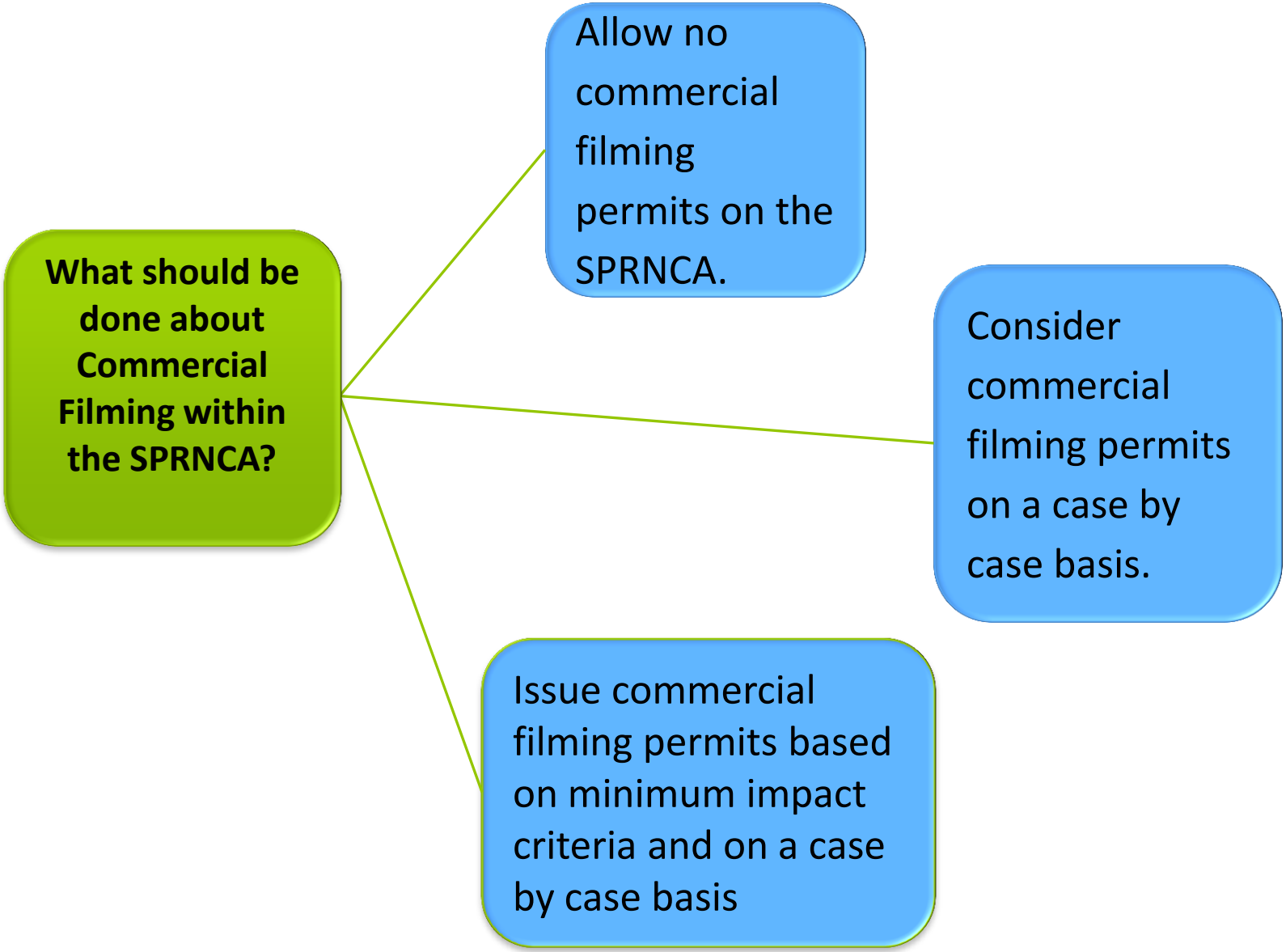
?

# Lands and Realty

**What should be done about the unused railroad ROW within the SPRNCA?**

- Acquire railroad ROW that are fee title in the SPRNCA
- Work cooperatively with RR ROW holders to turn RR grades into trails (Rails to Trails).
- Leave RR grade as is but obtain RR ROW relinquishments from ROW holders.
- Coordinate with EPA and other regulatory agencies to pursue avenues for cleanup of RR grades.

# Lands and Realty



# Small Group Activity

- 3 Resource Topics: (Cultural Resources, Wildlife, Recreation)
- At each table: Consider the issue questions in turn. What strategies are missing? What is unclear?

30 minutes: Topic 1

15 minutes: Topic 2 (review and add to previous group)

15 minutes: Topic 3 (review and add to previous groups)

# Conclusion/Wrap Up/Next Steps

- Discuss process moving forward
  - Field Trip(s)
  - Next Meeting
  - Individual working groups
- How to submit input
  - Email
  - Snail Mail
  - At the field trip or meeting

# Questions?